

Today the new Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, spoke to a joint session of Congress. Patrick Tideman, a current intern in my office who was raised in Wilmette and Libertyville and served in Iraq, joined me for the speech this morning. I asked him what his reaction was to the Prime Minister's remarks:

As a veteran who was injured in Baghdad, I appreciate the Prime Minister's thanks for the service and sacrifices that my fellow veterans and I have made and are continuing to make to establish a democratic republic of Iraq.

Two important examples the Prime Minister gave describing the transformation that country has made from the despotic regime I witnessed during the first hours of Operation Iraqi Freedom are: the ink stained fingers of Iraqi's who had voted for the first time in decades, and the previously unimagined equality and rights of Iraqi women. I further appreciate his vow to be an ally in the Global War on Terror, and not allow Iraq to become a "launching pad" for Al Qaeda.

I feel that it is important to continue to foster a positive relationship with the Republic of Iraq as both an ally in an unstable region, and as a nation where our veterans have made extensive sacrifices.